

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-64 (Canceled).

65. (New) A method of processing content in a computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system, the method comprising acts of:

- (A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of content stored on the storage system;
- (B) determining whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of content has expired;
- (C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of content; and
- (D) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deleting the unit of content in response to the request.

66. (New) The method of claim 65, wherein the acts (A), (B) and (C) are performed by the storage system.

67. (New) The method of claim 65, further comprising an act (D) of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C), receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

68. (New) The method of claim 65, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (D) receiving the unit of data at the storage system; and
- (E) writing the unit of data to the storage system.

69. (New) The method of claim 68, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (F) receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data; and

(G) writing the information specifying the retention period to the storage system.

70. (New) At least one computer readable medium encoded with instructions that, when executed on a computer system, perform a method of processing content in the computer system, wherein the computer system comprises at least one host and at least one storage system, and wherein the method comprises acts of:

- (A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of content stored on the storage system;
- (B) determining whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of content has expired;
- (C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of content; and
- (D) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deleting the unit of content in response to the request.

71. (New) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 70, wherein the acts (A), (B) and (C) are performed by the storage system.

72. (New) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 70, further comprising an act (D) of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C), receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

73. (New) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 70, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

- (D) receiving the unit of data at the storage system; and
- (E) writing the unit of data to the storage system.

74. (New) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 73, further comprising acts of, prior to performing the acts (A), (B) and (C):

(F) receiving information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data; and

(G) writing the information specifying the retention period to the storage system.

75. (New) A storage system for use in a computer system comprising at least one host and the storage system, the storage system comprising:

at least one storage device to store data received from the at least one host; and

at least one controller that;

receives a request, from the host, to delete a unit of data stored on the storage system;

determines whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of data has expired;

when it is determined that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, denies the request to delete the unit of data; and

when it is determined that the retention period for the unit of content has expired, directly deletes the unit of content in response to the request.

76. (New) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives information specifying the retention period for the unit of data.

77. (New) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives the unit of data and writes the unit of data to the at least one storage device.

78. (New) The storage system of claim 75, wherein the at least one controller receives information specifying the retention period for the unit of data along with the unit of data and writes the information specifying the retention period to the at least one storage device.